

E-Cigarettes

On April 25, 2011, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) [announced](#) that e-cigarettes will be regulated as tobacco products unless the products are marketed as therapeutic, making a claim that e-cigarettes can help someone quit smoking for example. While FDA made the initial announcement that it intends to regulate most e-cigarettes as tobacco products, much more research is needed about the potential health effects of e-cigarettes. The American Lung Association urges the Obama Administration and FDA to move forward without delay to begin overseeing these products to determine the public health impacts of their use.

What is an E-Cigarette?

- According to the FDA, electronic cigarettes, or e-cigarettes, are devices that allow users to inhale a vapor containing nicotine or other substances.¹
- Unlike traditional cigarettes, e-cigarettes are generally battery-operated and use an atomizer to heat a refillable cartridge that then releases a chemical-filled vapor.
- E-cigarettes are often available in flavors that may appeal to children and teens, including cotton candy, bubble gum, chocolate, strawberry and mint.²

Who Uses E-Cigarettes?

- *An increasing number of youth:* According to CDC, the number of students in grades 6-12 reporting having ever used an e-cigarette doubled from 3.3 percent to 6.8 percent from 2011 to 2012. Recent use of e-cigarettes among students grades 6-12 increased from 1.1 percent to 2.1 percent.³
- *Former and current smokers:* According to CDC, during 2010 to 2011, adults reporting that they have used an e-cigarette increased among both sexes, those aged 45-54 years old, non-Hispanic Whites, those living in the South, and current and former smokers. One in five current cigarette smokers has used an e-cigarette, with their use higher than that of former or never-smokers.⁴
- Additional and on-going research is needed to understand the full public health impact of e-cigarettes, including their impact on youth initiation, whether current smokers are switching to these products instead of quitting or are using them in conjunction with regular cigarettes.

What are the Health Effects of E-Cigarettes?

- The health consequences of the use of e-cigarettes and the vapor that they give off are unknown. There is currently no scientific evidence establishing the safety of e-cigarettes. No brand of e-cigarettes has been submitted to the FDA for evaluation of their safety.⁵
- In initial lab tests conducted in 2009, FDA found detectable levels of toxic cancer-causing chemicals, including an ingredient used in anti-freeze, in two leading brands of e-cigarettes and 18 various cartridges.⁶ The lab tests also found that cartridges labeled as nicotine-free had traceable levels of nicotine.
- There is no evidence that shows the vapors emitted by e-cigarettes are safe for non-users to inhale. The use of e-cigarettes in public places and workplaces may also complicate efforts to enforce and

comply with smokefree laws. Because e-cigarettes have not been thoroughly evaluated, the American Lung Association supports prohibiting the use of e-cigarettes under smokefree laws.

Can E-Cigarettes Help Someone Quit Smoking?

- The FDA has not approved e-cigarettes as an effective method to help smokers quit. The U.S. Public Health Service has found that the seven therapies approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration in combination with individual, group or phone cessation counseling is the most effective way to help smokers quit. Until and unless the FDA approves a specific e-cigarette for use as a tobacco cessation aid, the American Lung Association does not support any direct or implied claims that e-cigarettes help smokers quit.

¹ U.S. Food and Drug Administration. "E-Cigarettes: Questions and Answers." September 9, 2010. Available at: <http://www.fda.gov/ForConsumers/ConsumerUpdates/ucm225210.htm>.

² U.S. Food and Drug Administration. "FDA Warns of Health Risks Posed by E-Cigarettes." July 23, 2009. Available at: <http://www.fda.gov/ForConsumers/ConsumerUpdates/ucm173401.htm>.

³ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "Electronic Cigarette Use Among Middle and High School Students — United States, 2011–2012." *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*. September 6, 2013; 62(35):729–30.

⁴ King BA, Alam S, Promoff G, Arrazola R, Dube SR. "Awareness and Ever Use of Electronic Cigarettes Among U.S. Adults, 2010–2011." *Nicotine & Tobacco Research*. February 2013; 15:1623–7.

⁵ U.S. Food and Drug Administration. "FDA and Public Health Experts Warn About Electronic Cigarettes." July 22, 2009. Available at: <http://www.fda.gov/NewsEvents/Newsroom/PressAnnouncements/2009/ucm173222.htm>.

⁶ U.S. Food and Drug Administration. "Summary of Results: Laboratory Analysis of Electronic Cigarettes Conducted by FDA." July 22, 2009. Available at: <http://www.fda.gov/NewsEvents/PublicHealthFocus/ucm173146.htm>.